ABSTRACT

Widespread use of social media in China is a double edged sword: social media offers opportunities for the government to connect with society, gauge the opinion of citizens in the public domain, and allow citizens to voice their anger when necessary by blowing off steam online rather than in the streets. However, social media also allows citizens to access information outside of China much more rapidly and efficiently and to link up and communicate with other citizens much more quickly. Social media allows users to share texts, photos, and files, making it much more difficult for the government to control information and to thwart organizing for political purposes. In some instances, the use of social media has forced the Chinese government to take actions that it otherwise would not have done or to reverse actions or policies already set in place. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate the double-edged sword that social media poses to government officials in China, particularly high-level party officials in Beijing.
INTRODUCTION

Zhang argues that since the 1978 market reforms, the communication landscape in China has changed dramatically, with the CCP wanting to manage this development in order “to stay ahead of the unwanted consequences of reform (Zhang, 2011).” Deng and Moore write extensively on how globalization presents to Chinese leaders a double-edged sword (Deng and Moore, 2004). On one hand, globalization fosters economic development, which has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty and has supplanted communist ideology as the party’s source of legitimacy. On the other hand, globalization exposes China to economic reforms that put pressure on the government to increase the rights of its citizens; an expansion that, one day, could call for the right to elect their own leaders. Such changes thus directly challenge the existing political order. Furthermore, due to globalization, new technologies have become widespread. These technologies have provided the state with new tools for surveillance and control of its citizens. Likewise, technology has given millions of people who live in poverty access to vital information in real time. China is now home to 731 million Internet users (Xu and Albert, 2017). This explosion of Internet use has made it more difficult for the Chinese central government to employ old methods of censorship. Citizens are now able to participate to some degree in the policy formation process (“China Struggles to Tame Microblogging Masses,” 2011). Today in China, for instance, there are more than 350 million Weibo microbloggers (Magistad, 2012). Microblogging allows citizens to express dissatisfaction with local policy, while simultaneously sharing pictures and other evidence of a policy’s ill effects. However, research by Abbott et al. has found that in China those “most likely to mobilize against the state are the least likely to use the Internet” leading to an initial belief by public officials that it is a relatively safe space for people to interact (Abbott et al., 2013). The media openness during the 2008 Sichuan Earthquake, the first case covered in this chapter, would challenge officials’ belief in the Internet as a safe space. As microblogging gains popularity worldwide, recent studies have begun to examined the use of microblogging in response to crisis events and have made recommendations about how to optimize these tools to aid in disaster response (Qu, Huang, Zhang & Zhang., 2011). The goal of this chapter is to illustrate the double-edged sword that social media poses to government officials in China, particularly high level party officials in Beijing.
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www.igi-global.com/article/determining-the-accessibility-of-e-government-websites-in-sub-saharan-africa-against-wcag-20-standard/181281?camid=4v1a

A User Satisfaction Study of London’s Congestion Charge e-Service: A Citizen Perspective
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